

Antonio VIVALDI

From Opus Three - *L'Estro Armonico*

Concerto in D minor n. 11, for two violins, cello and strings

In 1711, Hans Heinrich Beck presented the Basilea Musikkollegium with a copy of Vivaldi's *L'Estro Armonico*, in the Amsterdam Roger Marchand Libraire's edition. It is the first notice we have of this collection of twelve concerti for string orchestra, four with four solo violins (Concerti n. 1, 4, 7 and 10), four with two solo violins (Concerti n. 2, 5, 8 and 11) and four with one solo violin (Concerti n. 3, 6, 9 and 12). This allows us to date the publication between 1710 and 1711, when the Red Priest was about thirty. However some of the concerti were already known in Europe in manuscript. The Concerto in D minor n. 11 is among the Concerti for two violins, cello and strings: they stay midway between the traditional string concert (i.e. Corelli's concerto), where a little group of strings – the “Concertino” – contrasts with the whole of orchestra – the “Tutti” – and the new instrumental form precisely created and practiced by Vivaldi himself of a solo concerto, where a soloist alternates with the orchestra's body. It is a step from multiplicity to unity, from objective to subjective, this brilliant invention of Vivaldi that gradually raises the solo instrument to the dominating role it will play in the following centuries.

Giuseppe TARTINI

Concerto in D major *Sant'Antonio* for trumpet and strings

Young Tartini's extraordinary adventures, his swordsmanship, the offense to the Bishop that obliged him to leave Padua and hide for a long time in Assisi, portray an almost fictional, romantic character. Nevertheless, his youth over, the great violinist lived a quiet life in Padua, as first violin and Concertmaster at the Saint's Basilica, in a thriving musical and cultural environment, in close contact with contemporary Europe, that admired him as a great violin virtuoso for the intense expressiveness of his performances and as a sought-after teacher, the “nations' Master”, as he was defined. As far as Tartini's cheered performances are concerned, Count Giordano Riccati left us a moving testimony of his intense emotions when listening to the Maestro. Most of Tartini's compositions for orchestra – such as this very concerto – were meant for divine services in St. Antony's Basilica but he was often present in “academies”, i.e. in musical events that aristocrats held in their palaces in Venice and in Venetian territory. The concerto *Sant'Antonio* is classically divided into three movements: a first solemn, rhythmically measured *Allegro*, with an almost warlike modulation, allows the soloist to emerge and shine in wide virtuoso passages. The following *Andante* appears as an accompanied *cantabile*: the soloist weaves a beautiful melody to which the orchestra answers with a few dialogues, but in general it plays a homorhythmical harmonic support role. The fast final tempo closes the composition with a simple dancing theme, rich of exuberant rhythmic vitality, interrupted only at the end by the soloist's flowery rhythm before the concluding “tutti”.

Niccolò PAGANINI

Variations on Carnival of Venice op. 10 for violin and strings

No doubt the most famous among the virtuoso violinists of history, Paganini lived during the fullest development of the XIXth century Italian opera, and struck up a friendship with many other composers, among them Berlioz (who dedicated *Aroldo in Italia* to him) and Rossini: on the occasion of *Barbiere di Siviglia*'s first performance in Paris, Paganini acted in the orchestra as the first violin and played the whole part an octave higher! He composed a great number of works (Concerti, Studies, Capricci, Sonatas and Variations) almost exclusively dedicated to violin, that convey the passionate, virtuoso and theatrical spirit of contemporary Opera in an instrumental style.

The *Variations on Carnival of Venice* dwell on the theme of a most popular Venetian song, *My three-cornered hat*. It is one of Paganini's most acrobatic composition: each variation stresses a particular aspect of violin technique, from simultaneous octaves and tenths to double harmonics. The theme's melodic character, however, related still today to the wonderful Venice image, constantly comes out with its joyful charm.

Gioacchino ROSSINI

Variations in E flat major for clarinet and strings

These variations are presented in two distinct and complementary parts, each being characterized by a specific thematic element. The first part is an introduction and its theme has a complex story: it is taken, with the same clarinet “solo”, from Amaltea's aria “La pace mia perduta”, in *Moses in Egypt*, on its turn drawn from Rossini's early Oratorio *Cyrus in Babilonia or Baldassarre's fall*. The second part is instead integrated by five brilliant variations, that start with a theme from Malcolm's aria “Ah, quante lagrime” from *The Lake Lady*, an opera Rossini composed and had presented in Naples in 1819. Both the mentioned works belong to Rossini's Neapolitan period (1815-1823), a valuable chronological indication that allows us to date the *Variations for clarinet* composition around 1818-19.

Giovanni BOTTESINI

Gran Duo Concertante for violin, double bass and orchestra

In solo bass literature, the *Great Duo* by Bottesini has a preminent place. We do not know if the idea came from Mozart's aria “Per questa bella mano” K 612, in which, answering to a bass singer's voice, with subtle irony the bass simulates the soprano's part in an imaginary duet. Nonetheless, written during Italian opera's full splendour, the *Gran Duo* imitates an opera duet style, with a constant and subtle wit. If the style is vocal, virtuosity and sound technique are neatly instrumental: the two strings are exploited to the extreme limit of any possible acrobacy, with as much virtuosity as Paganini's works.

One of the two most famous bass players in history (the other one is Domenico Dragonetti, from Venice), Bottesini was also reknown as a conductor, and his name is linked to some famous events. He conducted, for instance, Verdi's *Aida*'s premiere in Cairo (1871) and founded the “Società del Quartetto” in Florence. Verdi himself recommended Bottesini for the charge of Director at Parma's Conservatory. As a composer, Bottesini left a whole series of *Operas* and *Oratorios*, as well as several instrumental compositions in which bass plays often a preminent role.

CD 01--69/70

 **Solisti Veneti**
Virtuosity and Melody in Italian Music

Tuesday, October 2, 2001
8 pm.

Edward Johnson Building
Walter Hall
80 Queen's Park Crescent
Toronto



With the participation of
Corale Veneta


CONSULATE GENERAL OF ITALY
Cultural Section
ISTITUTO ITALIANO DI CULTURA


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MUSIC

 **BCI** Banca Commerciale Italiana
of Canada

I SOLISTI VENETI

Considered by the public and critics to be one of the most active and prestigious international orchestras, they succeeded not only for their concert and recording activity, but also for the great variety of their cultural and artistic initiatives. Founded by Claudio Scimone in 1959 in Padua, the Group has held more than 4,000 concerts in more than 50 countries, from Europe to the United States to Japan, Australia, Russia, and in Latin America. They participate regularly in the world's most important Festivals, among them the Salzburg Festival, where they are the only foreign group invited to perform every year since 1965. They have received the most important awards both for executions and for recordings, which include more than 300 LPs and CDs. Remarkable among them are the "complete edition" of the opus of Antonio Vivaldi, all Albinoni's Concerts as well as cycles dedicated to Tartini, Geminiani, Mercadante, Galuppi, Boccherini, etc. and an important collection of Rossini's works. The group performs for the most important TV networks in Italy and abroad.

For many years "I Solisti Veneti" have been organizing, in collaboration with all the most important institutions and public entities of Veneto, the "Veneto Festival" with the purpose to promote the artistic, cultural and musical values of their Region.

The event is organized in cooperation with the Faculty of Music of the University of Toronto, the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Banca Commerciale Italiana of Canada, with the assistance of the Federation of Veneto Clubs and Associations of Ontario.

PROGRAM

Virtuosity and Melody in Italian Music

- | | |
|---|---|
| Tomaso ALBINONI
(1671-1750) | Concerto in F major
op. 5 n. 2 for strings
Allegro
Largo Allegro assai |
| Antonio VIVALDI
(1678-1741) | Concerto in D major
RV 93 for mandolin
and strings
Allegro Largo Allegro |
| Soloist: Ugo Orlandi, mandolin | |
| Antonio VIVALDI
(1678-1741) | from <i>L'Estro Armonico</i>
Concerto in D minor n.
11 for two violins,
cello and strings
Allegro Largo Allegro |
| Soloists: Chiara Parrini, Glauco Bertagnin, violin;
Gianantonio Viero, cello | |
| Giuseppe TARTINI
(1692-1770) | Concerto in D major
<i>Sant'Antonio</i> for
trumpet and strings
Allegro Adagio Presto |
| Soloist: Mauro Maur, trumpet | |
| Niccoló PAGANINI
(1782-1840) | Variations on the
<i>Carnival of Venice</i> op. 10
for violin and strings |
| Soloist: Francesco Ommassini, violin | |
| Gioacchino ROSSINI
(1792-1868) | Variations in E flat
major for clarinet and
strings on themes
from <i>Moses in Egypt</i> and
<i>The lake Lady</i> |
| Soloist: Lorenzo Guzzoni, clarinet | |
| Giovanni BOTTESINI
(1821-1889) | <i>Gran Duo Concertante</i>
for violin, double bass
and orchestra |
| Soloists: Lucio Degani, violin;
Gabriele Ragghianti, double bass | |

Tomaso ALBINONI

Concerto in F major, op. 5 n. 2 for strings

Out of a strange paradox, most of Albinoni's present celebrity is due to the reknown *Adagio for strings and organ*, that instead was written by the still living musicologist Remo Giazotto on an Albinoni's bass. In his times, Albinoni was one of the most known composers of both operas (about 50 melodramas) and instrumental pieces. Bach himself bears witness to Albinoni's fame by composing three Fugas "on a theme by Albinoni", eloquent proof of the great influence exerted by this author's style on his own works.

"A violin musician and Venetian amateur", Albinoni is described on his first Concertos collection's title page (Opus Second). A great violinist, therefore, but also a rich gentleman free to devote himself to music. In his vocal works – mainly in *Pimpinone's Intermezzo* and in *Il Nascimento dell'Aurora's Serenata* (both recorded by I Solisti Veneti) – Albinoni stands out for his melodic richness and his fine wit, that strongly influenced the comic intermezzo's history.

In his instrumental pieces, and specially in his five Concerto collections (Opus Two, Five, Seven, Nine and Ten, which illustrate all the musical evolution of his time), the "Venetian amateur" proves to be an expert and imaginative composer, endowed with, among other things, a deep and professional knowledge of instrumentation and contrappunto technique, together with a great inborn sensitivity to melody and the brightest sense of rhythm.

The *Concerto in F major, op. 5 n. 2* (published in 1707) assumes all these characteristics: the "violin musician" reveals himself in the soloist's brilliant passages during the first tempo; the opera composer, in the second tempo lyric dialogue between Soloist and Tutti (All); the contrapunctual expert, in the Final, a 5-part Fuga. Throughout the piece, a bright richness of instrumental colours reminds one of those Tiepolo's skies decorating the rooms where Albinoni used to play.

Antonio VIVALDI

Concerto in D major RV 93 for mandolin and strings

Vivaldi's Concerto for mandolin and strings came to us through a manuscript kept at Turin's Biblioteca Nazionale, with the title "Concerto with two violins, lute and bass". His combination is calibrated in order to allow the soloist instrument to stand out of the whole orchestra; the central voice – the viola – is missing, thus notably lightening the body of the accompanying orchestra. But such a combination must not deceive: in XVIII Century's Venice, "lute" was a common name for several instruments, including mandolin, often indicated as "Lombard lute". In any case, independent of its naming, mandolin was surely present in Venice's Orchestra della Pietà, where Vivaldi was Concert Master for a long time: the little orphan girls played it admirably and the Red Priest often established its use – mainly as a soloist – in several, most beautiful pieces.

In Vivaldi's time, moreover, mandolin hugely met the aristocrats' favour; among its lovers, we remember Marquis Bentivoglio, Vivaldi's protector and friend, and the French Ambassador's daughters, as well as many other Venetian and Italian aristocrats.